PROGRAM & COURSE OBJECTIVES
The goal of this course is to provide students with practical training and experience in conducting cyber ethnographic fieldwork (participant observation methods, interviewing, research design, sampling, coding, data analysis and ethics) in a practical context. The course combines classroom study with an actual cyber ethnographic research practicum. Throughout the semester students will immerse themselves in virtual environments, attend classes, and undertake a complex research project of their choosing. Students will spend some time participating in class lectures, but most of the time will be spent doing your research projects and writing fieldnotes, journal notes and reports.

By the end of the course you should be able to design a research plan, apply appropriate fieldwork techniques, understand how theories in your selected discipline are applied to a particular field site, write a final report summarizing the significance of the data collected, and understand ethical issues involved in cyber ethnography.

Course Goals
• Apply cyber ethnography fruitfully in your own work, when relevant.
• Understand what kinds of claims you could or could not make/support with your data;
• Compare and practice various ways of "performing" cyber ethnographic research.
• Become a discerning and critical, and, perhaps, even appreciative, consumer of cyber ethnographic research
• Learn how to write and submit a proposal for IRB approval

Course Requirements:

Workshop Participation (25%)
• Readings – It is essential that seminar participants come to class having read all
course materials thoroughly for each session. Grounding our critical exploration in the readings is vital to the analytical success of this course – both in class discussion and in written assignments. Work to become metacognitively aware of how the readings are shaping your ideas of what cyber ethnography is.

- **Class participation** (15% of course grade) – This is a seminar that depends upon your active participation in class discussion. Emphasis will be placed on critical analysis of the readings, which will be generated primarily through the articulation of thoughts and ideas in a seminar format. Students must be prepared to contribute critical comments grounded in the course readings.

- **Facilitating Discussion** (10% of course grade) – Each week, a group of students will be responsible for providing a short analytic overview of the reading. Of greatest importance, facilitators should look for distinctions in methodology, analysis, presentation of narrative, and the process of ethnographic research.

**Fieldwork** (25%)
The goal of this course is to provide students with practical training and experience in conducting cyber ethnographic fieldwork (participant observation methods, interviewing, research design, sampling, coding, data analysis and ethics) in a practical context. We expect you to spend approximately 50-60 hours at your fieldsite this semester

- **Fieldnotes or Reflections** – Extensive fieldnotes will be written, shared, and critiqued. Fieldnotes should be brought to class printed in triplicate with line numbering.

- **Coded and Transcribed Interviews (1 total)** – Ethnographic interviews will be conducted online with research participants. Depending on your study, interviews may require 60 – 90 minutes. Interviews will be shared with classmates for evaluation and critique and should be printed in triplicate with line numbering.

**Final Term Paper** (50%) *Details will be provided*

- **Write-up of Data and Analysis 10%** - 7 - 10 page “ethnography section” section of final paper due.

- **Presentation on Paper 10%** - Students will present 15 – 20 minute presentations (depending on enrollment) about their semester projects in class on 12/12 and 12/19. Presentations should focus on method, findings, analysis and conclusions.

- **Final Paper – 30%** - Students will write a publishable cyber ethnographic paper targeting a journal in their field of study. The full paper should be between 18 -35 pages.

**Guidelines for Written Work:**

Include a cover sheet for all assignments with your name, class/section, name and number of assignment, and date. A blank page at the end is not required.

Keep second copies of all assignments. In case a piece of written work is lost, regardless of fault, it is the responsibility of the student to provide a second copy.

Assignments are to be typed in 12 point type, double spaced with 1” margins on all sides of the paper, with pages numbered.

Papers are to be free from spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors. Please printout your paper and proof carefully before submitting.

Assignments are to be handed in as hard paper copies only. No faxed or emailed papers will be accepted unless prior permission is given.

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates noted. Late papers will be marked down unless the student has obtained prior permission of the professor (in the case of illness, etc.).

Additional Rules and Information.

Cell phones must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time.

Laptops may be used for note-taking only. No emailing or Web-surfing during class.

Students must show up on time and stay for the duration of the class. During class, students should not engage in personal conversations, read newspapers, do crossword puzzles, or undertake other personal diversions unrelated to class activity.

We will return all emails on a first-come, first-served basis. Do not assume that I have received your email. If I don’t reply, follow up with a phone call.

Academic Integrity. Plagiarism and cheating are, of course, forbidden, according to Rutgers University policy. You are responsible for reviewing and obeying these policies. A lengthy statement of the policy is at http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html.

On plagiarism, this statement (from history.rutgers.edu/undergrad/plagiarism.htm) appears in Rutgers University’s rules. Like all such rules, it applies to this class.

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be promptly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one’s words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: “to paraphrase Plato’s comment ...” and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent
nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one’s general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

**Required Books**

Book (B) or Online (O) at Sakai (https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal)

**Required Books**

- Emerson, R; Fretz, R; Shaw, L (1995) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press

**Reading Schedule**

**I. Critical Concepts (4 weeks)**

9/9: Introduction

9/16: *The Ethnographic Project*
- Read Erving Goffman, Bronislaw Malinowski and Clifford Geertz (Readings online)
- Reflection paper on Ethnography based on readings (4 pages)
- Observations on initial fieldsite-DISCUSION

9/23: *Cyber Ethnography Concepts and Theories*
- Read *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*.
- Reflection paper on intersection of ethnography and cyber ethnography
- Analysis of first two weeks on initial fieldsite-DISCUSION

9/30: *A Place on the Corner*
- Read *A Place on the Corner*
• Presentation on Designing IRB Proposal
• Proposed Fieldsite and initial observations and discussion on getting into a Fieldsite

10/7: Ethnographic Fieldnotes
• Read Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes
• Presentations on Fieldsites
• IRB proposals DUE

10/14: Virtual Methods
• Read Hine: Virtual Methods (readings online)
• First Fieldnotes due

10/21: Debates on the Role of an Ethnographer (Todd)
• Read Wacquant, L. “Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography” American Journal of Sociology 2002. (readings online)
• Read Responses to Wacquant by Elijah Anderson and Mitch Duneier (readings online)
• Politics of ethnography discussion—bring in fieldsite

10/28: Online Culture (Joe)
• Read Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture
• Transcribed Interviews Due

11/4: Two Bits The Cultural Significance of Free Software
• Read Two Bits The Cultural Significance of Free Software
• Coded Interviews Due

11/11: Ethnography and Virtual Worlds
• Read Ethnography and Virtual Worlds:A Handbook of Method
• Discussion of central research themes

11/18: The Craft of Research
• Read The Craft of Research Parts III and IV
• Memo on Research Themes Due

11/25 NO CLASS Thanksgiving Break—Focus on Final Papers

12/2: Data Sections
• Hand in 7-10 page draft data/ethnography section of final paper

12/9: Final Presentations
12/16: Final Presentations
12/16: Final Ethnography Papers Due